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Farm Foundation

Increasing Understanding of Public Problems and Policies

1995

- CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT
- RENEGOTIATING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT
- ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY TRENDS: IMPLICATIONS FOR AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCE USE
- FOOD SAFETY POLICY
- 1995 FARM BILL UPDATE
- SUSTAINABILITY AND INDUSTRIALIZATION: CONFLICTING OR COMPLEMENTARY

Subjects Discussed at Previous Conferences

- 1979 Controlling Inflation: Alternative Approaches, Impacts and Implications • Policy Legislative Process
- 1980 Dispersed vs. Concentrated Agriculture • Ethics of Public Policy • Productivity • Rural Transportation • Energy Policy Issues • Policy Issues and Educational Approaches
- 1981 Government Programs and Individual Decisions • Public Support of Research and Extension • Agriculture in the 1980s • Methodology of Public Policy Education
- 1982 Domestic Economic Policy • Federal Government Role in Resource Management • Trade Policy • Financing Government Under Tight Budgets • Food Policy
- 1983 Economic Transition • Land Ownership Issues and Policy Education Approaches • The U.S. Food and Agricultural System in the International Setting • The Policy Education Process
- 1984 Federal Deficit • Providing Public Services in an Era of Declining Taxpayer Support • Water Policy • Distribution Issues in Food & Agricultural Policy • Methodology Workshops • Emerging Policies of Food & Agriculture
- 1985 The Changing Face of America • The Changing Face of Agriculture • Status of 1985 Agricultural and Food Legislation • Tax Policy Revision • Developing Policy Education Programs on Controversial Issues
- 1986 Balancing the Federal Budget • Effects of Agriculture and Trade Policies on the Competitiveness of U.S. Agriculture • Human Stress and Adjustment in Agriculture • The Food Security Act of 1985 and Public Policy Education for the Future
- 1987 Socioeconomics of Rural America • Rural Revitalization • U.S. Agriculture in the International Arena • Role of Values, Beliefs and Myths in Establishing Policy • Policy Education and the Policy Process
- 1988 Policy Choices for Revitalizing Rural America • Priority Issues for a New Farm Bill • Opportunities for Joint Public Policy Education • Emerging Issues in Agricultural and Food Policy • Emerging Resource Issues • International Agricultural Relations
- 1989 The Global Environment for the U.S. Economy in the 1990s • Family Policy • Rural Development Policy • Public Policy Education • Water Quality Policy
- 1990 An Evolving Public Policy Education • Safe Food and Water: Risks and Tradeoffs • Balancing Environmental and Social Concerns with Economic Interests in Agriculture • Structural Change in Food Industries and Public Policy Issues • Toward a New Europe
- 1991 Global Competitiveness, Productivity and Social Impacts • Public Policy Education Methods • Policy for Environment and Economic Development • Rural Resource Development and Work Force Productivity • Political Economy of the Dysfunctional Family
- 1992 Public Policy Education in the 1990s • Agriculture and Environmental Policymaking: Issues, Actors, Strategies • The Rural Social Infrastructure • Domestic Consequences of Evolving International Trade Policy
- 1993 The Status of Agriculture and Rural America • An Evolving Public Policy Education • Health Care Reform • Public Issues Education and the NPPEC • Environmental Policy: The Legislative and Regulatory Agenda
- 1994 Ethical Perspectives in Public Policy Education • Transition of Food and Agricultural Policy • Building Human Capital—Reforming Education • Environmental Policies • Local Impacts of Trade Policy • Financing K-12 Education • Sustainable Rural Policy

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Increasing Understanding of Public Problems and Policies—1995

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Farm Foundation, Oak Brook, Illinois

January, 1996

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FOREWORD

This publication reports the major discussions of the 45th National Public Policy Education Conference held September 24-27, 1995, in Overland Park, Kansas. The 140 participants represented most states, the United States Department of Agriculture and other public agencies.

The conference is held to improve the policy education efforts of those extension workers responsible for public affairs programs. The ultimate goal is to help citizens faced with solving local and national problems make more intelligent and responsible decisions.

Specific objectives were: 1) to provide timely and useful information on public issues; 2) to explore different approaches to conducting public policy education programs; and 3) to share ideas and experiences in policy education.

The Farm Foundation financed the instructional staff for, and the transportation of one individual from each extension service to, this conference which is planned in conjunction with the National Public Policy Education Committee. The Foundation also financed publication and distribution of these proceedings which are made available to state and county extension personnel, teachers, students and others interested in increasing understanding of public policy issues.

Neil L. Meyer, Chairman
National Public Policy
Education Committee

Walter J. Armbruster
Managing Director
Farm Foundation

January, 1996

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Abstracts

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

THE MICROWAVE SOCIETY AND CROCK-POT GOVERNMENT

*Governor Bill Graves
State of Kansas*

Citizen involvement is alive and well in the Heartland. While it may not always be readily apparent, if those in elected positions listen more carefully, they will hear their constituents very clearly. The fact is, the citizenry expects public officials to perform their duties properly and effectively, and to be sensitive to understanding that there are always multiple sides to any policy decision.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL LEARNING IN THE UNITED STATES, 1960-1995

*Carmen Sirianni
Brandeis University*

The process of civic innovation in the United States is examined in reference to recent thinking on social capital, and the limits of Robert Putnam's argument on the decline of social capital are explored. The development of civic environmentalism provides a case study that shows how social capital has been built within a complex regulatory arena over two and a half decades, and how such innovation provides a foundation for a more robust "public policy for democracy.,, Comparisons to community organizing in urban settings are also suggested.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT - FEDERAL LEVEL

*Sam Brownback
U.S. House of Representatives - Kansas*

Today, citizens want to "take back,, their government. They are tired of being given mandates from afar that don't reflect or represent their true local needs. This is resulting in a revolution in civic involvement that is being reflected in the election process as this moral and spiritual revival sweeps across the nation.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC POLICY FORMATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A RURAL KANSAS SENATORIAL DISTRICT

*Janis Lee
Kansas Senate*

It means hard work, long hours and writing responses to all letters coming in, but state senate-to-consituency communication can be accomplished. The result is an electorate with a sense of greater involvement in state government, a better understanding of the decision-making process, more opportunity for civic participation, and greater voter turnout. A side benefit has also been a restoration of integrity in public dialogue and a building of trust through interacting, and involving as much of the public as possible.

JOHNSON COUNTY CITIZENS ARE INVOLVED WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

*Johnna Lingle
2nd District Commissioner, Johnson County Kansas*

Developing active citizen involvement in local government can be successful as long as the agencies involved are responsive to those efforts of involvement, are willing to change, and government employees are “customer” oriented. Johnson County, Kansas, has met those requisites with the end result being pro-active citizen participation in the governmental process. It has meant changes in the way agencies and bodies have recognized and responded to public needs, with the end results being increased volunteerism, greater communication and understanding, and increased citizen support and involvement.

RENEGOTIATING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

THE PAST AND FUTURE: SOCIAL CONTRACT, SOCIAL POLICY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

*Cornelia Butler Flora
Jan L. Flora
Iowa State University*

The “social contract” between citizens and the state is under negotiation, with the potential for major changes in the definition of the role of the state.

That shift can impact the legitimacy of the state and the way civic society operates. Social capital is a critical component of civic society, and can be enhanced or destroyed by policies and their implementation. Social capital is particularly important for communities of place, and consists of reciprocity and trust which reduce the transaction costs of other forms of capital. Short term “problem solving” policies and highly regulatory policies focusing on means, not ends, tend to reduce social capital.

ASSET-BASED ALTERNATIVES IN SOCIAL POLICY

*Michael Sherraden
Deborah Page-Adams
Washington University, St. Louis*

The current U.S. welfare state is heavily oriented toward the provision of income for consumption, but the income-based welfare state is under considerable strain, and there are signs that it may be in decline. Among several types of alternative strategies are asset-based policies, which would focus more on savings and investment. Proposals for asset-based policies, such as Individual Development Accounts, are becoming more prominent. Along with such proposals comes a research agenda to inquire into the effects of assets on individual and household well-being. If asset building has multiple positive effects, as evidence indicates, then it would be desirable for social policy to shift in this direction.

APPLICATION OPPORTUNITIES IN PUBLIC ISSUES EDUCATION

*Alan J. Hahn
Cornell University*

A review of the 1994 debate on national health care reform suggests that renegotiating the social contract in a democratically responsible way requires (1) time for gestation, (2) consensus seeking among the active players, (3) public understanding and support, and (4) representation of all sides, including poor people. Roles for educators include (1) facilitating consensus seeking among the major players, (2) educating citizens as well as active players, and (3) involving poor people. Such a combination of conflict resolution and empowerment can be thought of as the “third wave” of public issues education.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY TRENDS: IMPLICATIONS FOR AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCE USE

NATIONAL POLICY TRENDS: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESOURCE CONSERVATION

*Jeffrey A. Zinn
Congressional Research Service*

This paper reviews the status of implementing the 1990 Farm Bill, identifies how knowledge about key topics has changed over the past five years, and examines relationships between the political changes and the ongoing process for developing a farm bill this year. It concludes with some observations about how change since 1990 might affect future farm policy debate. These observations include: the congressional setting will be more volatile in the future; information will likely play a less important role; and this farm bill will be largely about redressing past excesses on environmental topics, rather than expanding upon the existing base of program accomplishments.

CIVIC ENVIRONMENTALISM AND NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY: REFORM OR ROLLBACK?

*DeWitt John
National Academy of Public Administration*

“Civic Environmentalism” is a kind of problem-solving that occurs at the local level when people custom-design answers to local environmental challenges. Tradition has held that laws and regulations and uniform goals have tended to impose uniform procedures and policies on a wide array of local conditions. Environmental policies have been designed to fit an essentially top-down, narrowly-focused mode of government.

People have learned how to custom-design responses to fit local situations. And when they have done this, the practical problems which they face and the inherent complexity of most environmental problems have led them to take a broader approach, focusing not just on one symptom or issue, but on a complex mix of environmental issues, and to social and economic issues as well.

**WHOSE LAND IS IT ANYWAY?
ENDANGERED SPECIES, PRIVATE PROPERTY, AND
THE FIGHT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

*Jon H. Goldstein
U.S. Department of the Interior*

The Endangered Species Act is up for reauthorization. Prominent among the criticisms of the Act are: ESA protects listed species to the exclusion of human needs; ESA ignores economic considerations, imposing burdensome, inequitable costs on landowners, businesses and workers; ESA constitutes an unconstitutional “taking” of private property without compensation. In this paper, I distinguish legitimate concerns about the Act and the endangered species process from self-serving carping, summarize the Administration’s and Congress’ proposals for reforming the process, and report the status of and prospects for reauthorization.

FOOD SAFETY POLICY

**CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF RISK:
IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD SAFETY POLICY**

*Margy Woodburn
Oregon State University*

Recent surveys indicate that the majority of consumers believe that their food is generally safe. A shift has occurred in the last three years toward more concern about spoilage/foodborne illness. However, consumers are generally found to differ greatly in their perceptions of hazards and their trust in all involved in the food supply, which is an important element in confidence. An inherent ambivalence in attitudes toward food has increased as food choice-making becomes more complex. A major policy issue is the optimum balance between regulation and consumer information/education in increasing the safety of the food supply and consumer confidence.

ECONOMIC ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH FOOD SAFETY

*Stephen R. Crutchfield
USDA Economic Research Service*

American agriculture excels at producing an abundant supply of safe, nourishing food for the nation and the world. Despite the productivity and

quality of the nation's food system, concerns remain about the safety and quality of the food we eat and the water we drink. In recent years some well-publicized incidents, such as the contamination of hamburgers with the *E. coli* O157:H7 bacteria and residues of the pesticide Alar on apples, have led to increased public concern about the possibility of foodborne illness and exposure to potentially hazardous chemicals in the food supply. According to the USDA's 1991 Diet and Health Knowledge Survey, 43 percent of primary meal preparers cited bacteria or parasites in food as the food safety issue of greatest concern to them. An additional 22 percent cited pesticide residues in food as their greatest safety concern. In response, the Agriculture Department has begun several broad-based efforts to make further improvements in the safety and quality of the nation's food supply.

This paper discusses the food safety issue from the economist's perspective. Economics has an important role to play in the public debate about food safety. Fundamental economic principles help explain why a food safety problem may exist. Economic analysis of the costs of foodborne disease helps put the overall social burden of unsafe food into a broader perspective. Finally, economic analysis of the costs and benefits of alternative policies to improve food safety supports public and private decision making by allowing us to rank policy options on the basis of their expected costs and benefits.

1995 FARM BILL UPDATE

1995 FARM BILL WILL WE DECOUPLE?

*Barry L. Flinchbaugh
Kansas State University*

Traditionally, Farm Bill debate and discussion have been more along the lines of commodity groups than political parties. However, with a Democratic White House and a Republican Congress, old standards of "you scratch mine and I'll scratch yours" have become history with the debate over the new Farm Bill. There are also a lot of myths involved with the Freedom to Farm proposal.

1995 FARM BILL

*Ron Knutson
Texas A & M University*

In times of substantially reduced funding, it is unlikely that there will be many farm program participants who are better off as a result of the 1995 Farm Bill. Whereas some farmers and ranchers in the past looked to farm bills to solve financial problems or stabilize prices, this is not reasonable expectation for the 1995 Farm Bill. The second point has to do with the manner in which the farm bill is developed. In the past, reconciliation has played an important role in the development of farm policy. What is new and different about the 1995 Farm Bill is that reconciliation appears to be the drive core of the process. Moreover, ideological mandates from the majority leadership, particularly in the House, appear to be driving the process, as opposed to traditional debate and compromise procedures. In the process, authorizing committees appear to be more partisan, and therefore, relatively less important in farm policy development.

SUSTAINABILITY AND INDUSTRIALIZATION: CONFLICTING OR COMPLEMENTARY

INDUSTRIALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE: WHAT ARE THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS?

*Michael Boehlje
Purdue University*

The economic benefits of the dual dimensions of industrialization of agriculture -- implementation of a manufacturing approach to the food and industrial product production and distribution chain, and negotiated coordination among the stages in that chain -- are expected to dominate the economic and social cost, resulting in a rapid movement of the livestock sectors (particularly pork) followed chronologically by the grain sectors to an industrial model of production and distribution. The implications of this industrialization process for agricultural policy with respect to traditional farm programs, environmental policy, labor regulation, food safety, information/technology transfer and regulation of structure are profound. In essence, the underlying policy questions can be stated simply: (1) should the

perceived by some to be a more acceptable structure of the industry, and (2) if industrialization of the agricultural sector does occur, can one justify unique policies like price and income supports, and exemption from other policies such as worker safety and environmental regulation, for an industry that is now no longer different than other manufacturing and industrial sectors of the economy.

SUSTAINABILITY: OBSERVATIONS, EXPECTATIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

*Dana L. Hoag
Melvin D. Skold
Colorado State University*

We explore the concept of sustainable agriculture (SA) in light of industrialization. We are neither supporters or opponents of SA, but we do see a disturbing lack of understanding about what the term means and consequently what its contributions have been. While the goals of sustainability are laudable, the term SA is only the most recent catch-all phrase to address externality problems in agriculture (Hoag and Skold). Like other terms which preceded it, the term SA is not likely to endure. The issues and concerns of its proponents are too diverse and intractable to unify. However, new terms or phrases will arise, because the concerns bundled in SA are important and they will persist. It is in the definitions of SA that people express their concerns about agriculture. And it is these concerns that need to be addressed, whether it be through SA, the latest catch phrase, or through narrower, more targeted programs.

We will attempt to persuade the reader that the worthy goals of SA can be and are better accomplished through other more problem-specific programs and policies. Furthermore, industrialization will play a part in addressing many of these issues. SA's search for its identity has left an awareness about some problems which may need to be addressed, but the market will deal with many of these without the need of government policies. If and where the market fails to ensure the level of sustainability that the public demands, policies may be required. The trick comes in knowing when market signals are not correctly reflecting society preferences.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGING STRUCTURE OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

*Don Paarlberg
Purdue University*

Structural changes are needed that will: check the drift toward concentration of land ownership, change the attitude toward off-farm income, and open up farming opportunities for qualified young persons in addition to those who stand to inherit going farms.

Institutional changes that should be considered are: reduce subsidies to super-large farms which, with government help, are gobbling up the smaller units; consider farms with off-farm income not as competitors with full-time farmers but as a new and worthy form of agriculture; and acknowledge vertical integration as an accomplished fact.

The purpose of my paper is to examine what structural changes, short of basic land reform, might occur which would:

- Check the drift toward concentration of land ownership,
- Bring in needed income from nonfarm sources, and
- Open up farming opportunities for qualified young persons in addition to those who stand to inherit a going farm operation.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGING STRUCTURE OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

*Harold F. Breimyer
University of Missouri-Columbia*

The structural change underway in agriculture, often referred to as its industrialization, is not a nibbling at the edge of traditional structure but total reconstitution. It replaces the market system as the coordinating instrument for the agricultural and food sector with differentiated oligopoly -- a hierarchical structure that requires a discipline and a collective ethic that are at variance with our tradition. Many current developments, however, depend on almost-free-good energy; they will end as energy costs skyrocket in the next century. Agriculture's structure, essentially sustainable, could revert to individual proprietorships.

Citizen Involvement

